Relationships between Linguistics and Applied Linguistics: Some Danish Examples

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Contents

major role in establishing applied linguistics as a theoretically explicit research and teaching activity in Scandinavia.

Note

1. This is an insight from Harold Garfinkel, who points out that one cannot directly apply ethnomethodology to concerns of second language acquisition, primarily because change (possible acquisition) and non-change (possible fossilisation) over time are central variables for us, whereas they are usually not included in ethnomethodological studies.

1 Relationships Between Linguistics and Applied Linguistics: Some Danish Examples

FRANS GREGERSEN

Introduction

Linguistic knowledge may be applied to a host of problems. The most important ones are either concerned with remediating pathological states as to speaking or understanding or focussed on education. Within the first sphere we find subjects and professional specialties such as speech therapy, remediating reading difficulties and the application of linguistic knowledge to sign language. Educating the public is the task of language planning, e.g. reforming orthographies, proposing new terminology and creating norms for efficient communication in society at large. More specific are mother tongue teaching and foreign language pedagogy, two areas that have loomed large in all descriptions of applied linguistics, the last one to the extent that it has tended to become synonymous with it.

In what follows I shall present an overview of how some of these areas have been treated by Danish linguists. The order will be chronological and the focus will be on the exploitation of linguistic theories for solving practical problems.

The Rask–Petersen Programme

Rasmus Rask (1787–1832) and Niels Matthias Petersen (1791–1862) were connected by strong bonds of friendship. Of these two friends,

Rasmus Rask is well known outside Denmark as one of the founding fathers of comparative Indo-European linguistics, whereas N. M. Petersen is virtually unknown to non-Danes. It is, however, necessary to take both of them into consideration if only because Rask died so young that it was left to Petersen to carry through the programme. As we shall see, Petersen modified Rask's ideas somewhat and broadened their scope so that orthographical reform and a new curriculum for the higher schools and the university were integrated. In short, Rask produced the theory that in Petersen's hands grew into a programme.

As far as I know, Rasmus Rask was the first Danish linguist to propose a clear distinction between theoretical and applied linguistics. This is, on the one hand, no surprise, since he was our first professional linguist of all. On the other hand, the way in which he delineated the disciplines may still surprise us simply because the words sound so up to date.

By theoretical linguistics Rask understands that part of the study of language which discovers and formulates the rules on which applied linguistics is based. It is probably, Rask says, universal but in order to explain what happens in particular languages a number of specific considerations are necessary. Older than this theoretical study of language is applied linguistics. This consists of explanation of words and explanation of grammar. The first one is best formulated as a dictionary while the second one leads to grammars.[1]

Theoretical linguistics is thus seen as an abstraction of general principles from the description of particular languages. This position is very significant. Two problems arise: the first is the trivial empiricist one. How can we describe two languages so that the descriptions may be compared without first agreeing on the principles by which the descriptions themselves should be constructed? Even if applied linguistics is chronologically older than theoretical linguistics, this means only that descriptions in the form of grammars have typically been implicit as to theory. It does not mean that the theory has not been there all the time. The second problem concerns the status of theoretical linguistics. If we compare descriptions, we compare metalanguages and not languages. Languages are simply not directly comparable. This means that theory becomes ambiguous. There is a slight but interesting difference between saying something about which way the cases of nouns should be ordered in grammars and stating that universally some cases imply others or for that matter that any language must have cases. Rask was probably interested in both, but he lacked a technical terminology for the study of language as such.

For Rask, applied linguistics leads to two useful things, a dictionary and a grammar. In both cases he aims at explanation not just description. And explanations were *historical* then.

A great debate has raged concerning Rask's historicism.[2] Rask as an historical person was placed at the watershed between two epochs, the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the romanticist historicism of the early nineteenth century. Rask met rationalism as a schoolboy and he seems to have fixed some, if not all, of his opinions already then. But the trend of the time was romantic and Rask was as receptive as the contemporary poets. Accordingly, both rationalistic and romantic features are clearly discernible in his life and letters. Although his psychological make-up was rationalist, it is unquestionably true that both Rask's public and his followers interpreted him as a herald of Romanticism.

And for Romanticism explanation was equivalent to historical analysis. It is a simple thought — and many of us still find it intensely obvious — that in order to understand something we must discover its roots and its development. The answer to the question: how come? is simply that: it became. In this way, words are explained as stemming from the earliest attested word form and for the Nordic language area this is normally an Old Icelandic word form. In fact, Rask left parts of a manuscript for an etymological dictionary.

As everyone knows, this type of linguistics has been singularly successful. Etymological dictionaries for all the major European languages have been produced, much to the satisfaction of the philologists and the general public. The other explanatory activity, historical grammars, do not abound in the same way. Rask himself wrote a brilliant paper on the endings and forms of modern Danish explained by their Old Icelandic equivalents and N. M. Petersen wrote a Scandinavian comparative language history, but on the whole the tradition of writing historical grammars culminated in Denmark only much later. Otto Jespersen's majestic *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* dates from 1909 (completed in 1949) and Kristoffer Nyrop wrote his *Grammaire Historique de la Langue Française* from 1899 till 1930. Those were works lasting a lifetime.

Rask was torn between Romanticism and Rationalism, and nowhere is this seen as clearly as in his approach to orthographical reform. On the one hand he knew much more about the historical reasons for a specific way of spelling than his contemporaries; on the other hand he consistently maintained that the written language should picture the

spoken language of his day. In 1826 Rask published a long and systematic treatise on Danish orthography.

For us it seems only too evident that writing expresses speech, even though we are, some of us, aware of how indirect the representation sometimes is. But for Rask's contemporaries writing was something much more dignified than speech. While Rask was himself so anti-Christian that he dropped his second name because it happened to be Kristian, his public was still brought up on the holiness of the script. Small wonder, then, that Rasmus Kristian Rask met his Waterloo by proposing that we analyse first the spoken language of today and then modify writing so that it captures the essentials of this speech. The resultant orthography looked distasteful and vulgar to a cultural élite accustomed to embellishments accumulated over centuries.

Rask died only six years after having formulated his programme for an orthographical reform but N. M. Petersen carried on. He removed two features that were foreign to Rask's own principles, namely Rask's insistence on capital letters in nouns and his practice of inserting a *j* after velars as a sign of palatalisation in words like *skje* ('happen') and *gjerne* ('readily').[3] The capital letters were destined to remain the most long-lived sign of reactionary resistance to reform, although Rask's arguments were precisely those which made N. M. Petersen and the radicals drop them: the Germans use this means to indicate differences between homographic word forms belonging to different word classes. N. M. Petersen and his pupils were violently anti-German.

The programme for orthographic reform answered societal needs. The nineteenth century was the period of mass alphabetisation in Denmark and for a population going from orality to more or less restricted literacy the way to learn writing must be through speech. Reading and writing were progressively secularised, just as teaching itself was secularised and professionalised so that at the close of the century an active teachers' union was fighting vehemently for the Rask–Petersen reform. This resulted in the elevation of a moderate version of the Rask orthography as the official norm in 1889. The abolishment of capital letters and the introduction of the Scandinavian *å* instead of *aa* — a letter which Rask felt very strongly about — followed in 1948.

In one sense, then, the Rask–Petersen programme of language planning was singularly successful, although none of its progenitors lived long enough to see it. In another respect the programme was not so triumphant. The programme was not only concerned with orthographical reform, N. M. Petersen also forged it into a programme for a reform of

the education of the young. In order to explain this side of the programme, I have to enlarge a little on the historical background.

The schools of Denmark at the beginning of the nineteenth century did not form one integrated and comprehensive system but rather formed two separate systems. The cities had their Latin grammar schools, while in the country the village schools taught religion, reading and some writing. The curriculum of the Latin grammar schools was of course based on the classical heritage and the science corresponding to this body of knowledge is classical philology. Now in this age of historicism a tension arose between the *inter*national classical past and the *intra*-national past.

In the beginning the newly founded science of comparative Indo-European philology lived and thrived peacefully beside classical philology. Ideologically, however, what happened with romanticism was that the nation states slowly discovered that they had a past of their own — and a glorious one. Thus Rask's and the Grimms' efforts were directed at producing critical editions of the ancient monuments of early Germanic and Icelandic. And soon this national past would present itself as not just a supplement but an alternative to the classical tradition. The German development is particularly important here, though I do not claim to understand it thoroughly. It was determined by specific political needs — from resistance against the Napoleonic threat to Bismarckian imperialism — and it was modified by such great integrators of classical and national culture as Goethe and Schiller. While Rask was alive, the German cultural movements could still function as the natural avant-garde or ally of Danish romanticism but after the war in 1848 and the national catastrophe in 1864 — another war with Prussia — Germany was rather perceived as the King Kong threat of the South to Denmark as a nation state. A wave of Scandinavism swept through the country.

N. M. Petersen sensed this danger of cultural imperialism before many others. In three great treatises dating from 1840 to 1845 he proposes to defend Danish national culture by integrating it in a common nordic cultural sphere. In his attempt to forge a new historical compromise between classical and old nordic culture, N. M. Petersen places Old Norse and Greek as the cornerstones of his curriculum. Second comes Latin and — as a consequence of comparative philology — Gothic. Petersen proposes that these four languages be taught in the 'inventive' way. In the beginning, he says, the student should be presented with material for generalisations, imitating the way in which a child learns his or her first language. This inductive way of teaching is with Petersen

supplemented later on by a miniature comparative Indo-European grammar, containing chapters on word formation and declensions. In this way, Petersen observes, the pupil will at once get some knowledge of the languages under study and have his own language explained by the historically prior languages. Following Rask, Petersen notes that the modern languages have lost most of the formal grammatical distinctions that the old languages had, so how could we even begin to understand the way our modern languages work if we did not look at the ancestors?

Last but not least, Petersen advocated a common Nordic written language. Once again the threat from the South was the immediate instigator. Petersen firmly believed that Danish was doomed if it remained alone and though his eyes were open to the nationalist tendencies of contemporary Norway, he still felt that the written norms were comparatively close to each other, close enough, that is, to make an effort.

Interestingly, he was very conscious of what he was proposing. He did not write as a Professor at the University, because he was not yet one, he simply wrote as the concerned citizen calling upon educators, politicians, and poets and authors to support a common Nordic norm. He hoped in this way to stimulate an organic growth, the inter-nordic language should spring from the midst of the people. The thought was strong enough to result in an inter-nordic meeting in 1869. Various measures were agreed upon here in order to facilitate a gradual fusion of the written languages of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. But by then, N. M. Petersen had died.

As stated above, the Rask–Petersen programme was a partial and slow success. Ironically, the success was so slow that when the reformed orthography was finally accepted, it was already quite conservative in relation to speech. And since then, the gulf between phonetic transcriptions of speech and its written counterpart has grown ever wider.[4] Thus, Rask's *principles*, first of all the principle of basing writing on speech, were overtaken by the conservatism of an official norm.

On the other hand, we should not underestimate the Petersen part of the programme. Petersen succeeded in pointing out the foreign-ness of the classical tradition as compared to the home-spun Old Nordic culture. In the hands of the strong political farmers' movement in the latter half of the century this became a forceful weapon in their fight for political and cultural recognition. The educated classes had been educated in the classical sense and the deconstruction of this *Bildung* was the most

important result of the next period. But Petersen paved the way for Jespersen.[5]

The Otto Jespersen Programme

Denmark is a small country. Everybody knows or is related to everybody else. One of the few school grammar books of Danish that Rask ever reviewed is the one written by W. B. Bentzien. And Bentzien was Otto Jespersen's maternal grandfather.

Otto Jespersen (1860–1943)[6] became famous as a linguist at a time when becoming famous meant more than it does today. The linguistic world was smaller as measured by the number of practising professionals but it was also broader and, in fact, Jespersen's contribution is not that easy to pin down — he was not a specialist but an all-round linguist. Probably his is the last generation to number several outstanding scholars of this type.

Transformational grammarians learnt a lot from Jespersen's *Analytic Syntax* and his *The Philosophy of Language*, whereas students of English universally admire his *Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles* I–VI. Teachers and applied linguists regard *How to Teach a Foreign Language* (1904) as a classic and all phoneticians interested in the history of their field have studied Jespersen's *Lehrbuch der Phonetik*, a Bach-like summary of all that was known then within the discipline he had contributed to founding.

Jespersen was not the only scholar to take an interest in phonetics. On the contrary, phonetics was on the linguistic agenda all over Europe in the 1880s. Comparative Indo-European linguistics in 1878 witnessed a battle cry from the young Turks of Leipzig proclaiming the birth of the neogrammarian doctrine. In the history of linguistics the neogrammarians represent a typical methodological break with their immediate ancestors. Methodologically, the trick of comparing is too strong: anything may be compared to anything if we do not restrict comparisons. One way of restricting comparisons is to speculate on the plausibility of the resulting changes. The aim of comparing sets of words from one attested language with sets of words from another one is after all to establish the common source so that we can postulate that this source has given rise to specific changes leading to the attested word forms. Now, the middle generation of comparatists did not have much of an idea of phonetics, consequently they did not restrict their comparisons phonetically. The neogrammarians specifically revolted against such armchair linguistics and called for the

investigation of living dialects in order to get to know what changes were at all phonetically plausible. In this way, sound changes would eventually be explained by physiological phonetics.

The neogrammarian trend was as strong in Denmark as in Germany. Danish dialectology was founded by K. J. Lyngby, who was a follower of August Schleicher's and an ardent believer in the regularity of sound change. In order to arrive at a systematic way of recording speech he had to invent a transcription praxis for Danish. This transcription praxis formed the basis for the Dania system of Jespersen, which remains the favourite phonetic alphabet for Danish dialectologists.

It might appear from the above that it was only Indo-European comparative philology that required a scientific phonetics. This is not so. The rise of phonetics cannot be understood without drawing attention to the societal need for a transformation of language teaching. N. M. Petersen had used Nordic culture to establish an alternative to the Latin and Greek culture fundamental to higher education since time immemorial. But even though belief in the classical heritage was shaken, it was left to the living languages to bring about its fall.

In 1885, at the third meeting of Nordic philologists, Jespersen was active in creating a society baptised *Quousque tandem*. The ciceronian name had been used by the German phonetician Viëtor as his *nom de guerre* when he published his 'Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren'. This sounds once again like a battle cry and verbal battle was grist to the young Jespersen's mill. He is one of the great polemical talents in Danish linguistics.

Jespersen and his fellow fighters wrote a great many papers on the need for a reform of the teaching of living languages, but to an English-speaking public his book *How to Teach a Foreign Language* has become the classic statement of his position. Published in 1901, the Danish original was adapted to the needs of an international public by removing only the more parochial examples. The translation appeared as early as 1904 and the reprint I have in my hand is the eighth from 1947. In the following I shall summarise and contextualise this classic statement.

As a phonetician Jespersen was an expert on speech. Theoretical phonetics was first and foremost an articulatory phonetics then, but theory proved eminently practicable in the teaching of living languages. Jespersen's standard example is the teaching of the voiced *z*. Before the advent of phonetics it was deemed impossible for Danish schoolboys to learn to pronounce a voiced *z* (schoolgirls were not given the opportunity). Jespersen showed that a five minute explanation and some simple exercises

sufficed. Those were the days when theory and practice went hand in hand.

The reform which Jespersen and his quousquists fought for was to be a pincer movement. The living languages were an inferior part of the curriculum which was dominated by the classics. This had to be altered. As Jespersen says, Latin and Greek can no longer be masters — and as servants they are not very well qualified. But this is only one half of the reform. The other half concerns teaching methods.

The traditional way of teaching a language takes as its point of departure that the pupil should confront the values encapsulated in the literature. By allowing individual pupils to reinterpret these values in terms of their own lives the teacher educated them. Since we are mainly dealing with dead languages, it follows that reading rather than speaking, and reading for the content of the literature and not feeling the sound of it by pronouncing it was the natural way. Understanding was checked by letting the pupils translate both ways. In fact, the main activity in the lower grades and the intermediate stages as well was translation.

If we discard the classical languages as no longer epitomising true culture in order to make room for modern languages, we are however no longer dealing with languages the pronunciation of which does not matter. Rather we are dealing with languages that may be heard spoken by real living natives. Thus, when Jespersen stated that the aim of teaching a foreign language is to make it possible for pupils to speak the language so that they are understood by the natives and to read the literature so that they get nearly the same response as native speakers would, he is calling for a revolution. Nowhere is his radical stance expounded more effectively than in his repeated attacks on translation. Translation, he says, is the least important of all the activities of a modern classroom: the pupils should learn the foreign language like they learnt their mother tongue — by speaking it. Translation is not only far less important than exercises in conversation, it is obviously harmful in that it forces pupils to proceed via their mother tongue.

Radicals will always have their conservative opponents and Jespersen and his friends were no exception. Jespersen, however, had a secret weapon — he was a tremendous worker. Not only did he answer his opponents in theoretically sound and often grossly polemical papers, he beat them practically as well. In 1885 — before the meeting which led to *Quousque tandem* — he had published the first grammar of modern English written in Danish and based on the spoken language. Soon afterwards this grammar was translated into Swedish — it must be

remembered that the revolt against the tyranny of the classical languages had its strongholds in the Nordic countries and in northern Germany. Even though Jespersen was then qualifying for a post at the university, he still found time to complete a Danish phonetics and a French reader. Having completed his doctoral dissertation in 1891, he issued the first book of his famous English Reader system. This system of books consisted of two readers for beginners (1895 and 1896), and two readers for the intermediate stages, the last one of which was an adaptation of *Treasure Island* (1892). The grammar book was a completely revised version of the one published in 1885. The system was reprinted continuously and gradually became universal.

The most salient feature of this system was of course the use of the phonetic alphabet. The reason why this is not used any more may give us a clue to why it was used then. The reason is that no modern Danish school pupil is ignorant of the pronunciation of English. All the mass media abound with English speaking persons and Danish television does not dub. As this has come to us with the advent of the radio and the television it follows that the situation when Jespersen proposed the parallel use of phonetic and normal spelling was completely different. It may very well be true that the use of this device was necessary in order to get rid of various idiosyncratic pronunciations propagated by teachers who could not themselves speak the language.

Public discussion of Jespersen's programme led to the comprehensive structural school reform that followed upon the acceptance of parliamentary reform in Denmark in 1901.[7] The thirty years which had passed since the Modern Breakthrough[8] had witnessed industrialisation and growing demands for participation. The nineteenth century had created the nation state; the twentieth century had to solve the resulting communication problems in the light of intensified commercial relations. Weakened by the attacks by followers of Petersen and those of Grundtvigian farmers the classics yielded, leaving the burden of initiating the young ones into the culture of Denmark as a nation to the subject of Danish. It is outside the scope of this paper to follow the consequences of this shift of burden but the definition of the living languages in the schools as a curious mixture of a Berlitz school and cultural area studies has remained with us to this very day (see Wagner's contribution to this volume).

The Jespersen programme was an unprecedented success, and Jespersen lived to see it. But as happens with all reforms, it was modified by teachers and subjected to the constraints of the institutions. Thus

when Jespersen calls for natural conversations instead of the learning of isolated words — or even worse, rote learning — in short for an inductive 'inventive' pedagogy based on natural everyday speech, he was overtaken by the stern reality of the schools. In the 1920s the author Hans Scherfig was taught by a well-known partisan of the programme, Vilhelm Stigaard. In Scherfig's (1986) bestseller *Stolen Spring* Stigaard is portrayed as lektor Oremark:

> The questions come one after another at breakneck speed. They're not supposed to think things over. That's a sign of uncertainty and hesitation. Oremark sits down on the desk in front of Jørgensen, and while he asks his questions he hits the top of the desk with his keys so Jørgensen will be distracted by the noise.
>
> 'I would not have taken that umbrella along? . . . Since it was raining, I had to take my umbrella along? . . . If it hadn't rained, I wouldn't have taken my umbrella along? . . . It wouldn't have rained if I had taken my umbrella along? — Is it coming? Is it coming? Is it coming? Is it coming?' shouts Oremark, and each time he hits the top of the desk wildly with his rattling keys.
>
> If, in spite of these measures, Jørgensen retains his composure and answers correctly, it's one of Oremark's tricks to shout' 'What's that you're saying? I can't hear you!' Then Jørgensen is gripped by doubt and makes a slight correction in what he said before.
>
> 'Yes, just as I thought!' Oremark screams. 'That was wrong. That's why you whisper and mumble. But you can't fool *me*!'
>
> Jørgensen quickly corrects it back to what he had said first.
>
> 'Well now what? Now what's the right answer?' Oremark shrieks. 'You hand me a whole bunch of things to choose from! That's good enough for me! Just give him anything, that idiot — right? That's your method. But I won't let anyone make a fool of me,' Oremark hisses very softly. 'I won't let people lead me around by the nose! If it couldn't have rained, perhaps I wouldn't have taken my umbrella along? . . . Seeing that it might rain, I took my umbrella along? . . . Since I thought that it wouldn't rain, I didn't take my umbrella along? . . . What was that? Answer! Answer! Answer! Answer! Quickly! Quickly! Quickly! Is it coming? Is it coming? Is it coming?' And each time he bangs the desk with his keys. Jørgensen's eyes follow the rattling bunch of keys, and his head bobs in time with them. (Scherfig, 1986: 139)

Seen from the fish-eye perspective of the pupil the reformer looks like a classical tyrant. Sic transit gloria mundi.

Louis Hjelmslev and the Saussurian Break

With Louis Hjelmslev[9] we are dealing with a new kind of linguistics, the linguistics that resulted from the Saussurian break. I stated above that the only way N. M. Petersen could imagine that a word form or a syntactical structure in the modern language could be explained was by having recourse to its genetic origin in an ancestor language. This presupposes that the modern language is in a way opaque, there is not enough information there for it to be at all understandable why people speak the way they do. This is in accordance with the romanticist idea that uneducated people, those who do not know the history of their nation and its language, lack essential awareness and are not really themselves. Hence the immense effort to educate them.

For the romanticists the speaking individual thus became an object-of-education and the change at the turn of the century may perhaps be formulated like this: from now on language as a system is an object-of-study. This indicates a new relationship between the intellectuals and the *masse parlante*. The romanticist guarded the secret of the national history and the keys to the national culture, the professional linguist of the twentieth century no longer aspires to this role but perceives himself rather as an expert practising at a safe distance from any ideological battle.

In coining the distinction between *synchrony* and *diachrony*, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913)[10] at once shifted the focus of linguistics and relegated the historical point of view to being forever just one possible point of view. Now, the existence of an element would not be explained by going back to its origin but rather by uncovering its position in the overall structure of the system inherent in the *parole*, speech. The system, *la langue*, does not reveal itself directly to us, it has to be inferred from *parole*. While it is hard work to do this, it is indispensable since *parole* is not the secret; *langue*, the social structure determining the individual use is.

This conception of linguistics opens for the science a direct path to contemporary speech but at the same time discards it as being but a symptom of an underlying order — the language system. Ideally this calls for new grammars independent of the classical tradition — grammars that disclose the hidden structure of the modern national languages, a system

the description of which has been doubly perverted, first by overstating the diachronic point of view, secondly by using as its technical apparatus terms taken from the study of languages of a different type, viz. Latin and Greek. These grammars would then usher in a new epoch of mother tongue teaching.

In Denmark Otto Jespersen in this respect was a structuralist *avant la lettre* branding as 'squinting grammar' all classically based descriptions. On the other hand, he himself continued to avail himself of the classical word classes in his grammatical descriptions. Two of his pupils, however, went much further, proudly naming themselves members of the structuralist movement which was on the move from the late 1920s.

Jespersen's pupil, Viggo Brøndal (1887–1942), chose an idiosyncratic path. By reverting to aristotelian semantic fundamentals of a very abstract nature he thought that he could weed out the inconsistencies that had accumulated in the classical tradition. Thus in his *Ordklasserne* (1928) Brøndal uses as basic concepts *Relator*, *relatum*, *Descriptor* and *descriptum* in his attempt to redefine the word classes.

The radical strategy adopted by Louis Hjelmslev (1899–1965) was to dispense with the traditional scenery altogether. Basing his descriptions on the identification of dependencies, Hjelmslev imagines that categories could be established by looking at the simple facts of occurrence and non-occurrence of elements. An element that always occurs when some other element occurs while this last element may also occur alone is obviously determined by the independent element. Hjelmslev's terminology is forbidding but the important thing for our purpose is that his aim was more revolutionary than that of his contemporaries in that he tried to replace the classical categories by new and much more rigorously delimited ones.

Obviously, the structuralist revolution promised great changes in applied areas such as mother tongue teaching, language pathology and foreign language pedagogy. And, obviously, these changes did not happen. In what follows I shall try to document that what happened instead was a breakaway of the theoretical disciplines from the applied ones.

First in line is foreign language pedagogy. I must confess that as far as I can judge the structural approach did not have any impact at all until the international introduction of contrastive linguistics reached Denmark only twenty years ago. In the schools the Jespersen influence reigned supreme all through the period of structuralism.

Next comes mother tongue teaching. Here we are in the fortunate

position of having a clear test case. Paul Diderichsen[11] was a Nordic philologist turned structuralist under the influence first of Viggo Brøndal and after his death of Louis Hjelmslev. At the same time, he was the teacher to whom was entrusted the teaching of modern Danish grammar at the university. For this purpose he wrote his *Elementær Dansk Grammatik* which appeared in 1946.

As a pupil of two great structural linguists, we might assume that Paul Diderichsen would use structuralist ideas in his work on the grammatical description of modern Danish. But his grammar is profoundly traditional. The structuralist flavour is due to the use of a sentence pattern model, analogous to Fries's but based on the written language, which lends itself to highlighting the importance of word order in modern Danish.

In the 1930s the study of speech pathologies had a fresh start, and this time pathological speech was no longer seen as exclusively a medical problem. In the internordic journal[12] which marked the new beginning (the first volume appeared in 1936), many of the leading structuralists published papers on phonetic topics. A primary concern was experimental phonetics but Hjelmslev discussed in two important papers the place of this discipline within the study of language. Hjelmslev's longest paper entitled 'Neue Wege der Experimental-phonetik' is quite atypical for him in that he latches on to the German neurologist and experimental phonetician Eberhard Zwirner's theory.[13] Zwirner had discovered that it was impossible to go directly from experimental measurements to the structure of speech. Clearly what the pathologists were after was descriptions of the hows and whys of normal speech in order to be able to describe abnormal speech. So if experimental phonetics could not deliver, the theoreticians had to be called for. Zwirner and Hjelmslev agreed that the structural expert was to supply the linguistic description on which experimental measurements could be based. In other words the linguists had to describe speech before it could be described. This deliberate paradox was not seen as such then. True, Zwirner had severe difficulties in living up to his ideals because there were no structural descriptions of German but this was not seen as more than a local problem.

The way out of the predicament is too often to describe something other than speech, i.e. to take as one's point of departure 'what everybody knows about Danish' or simply to substitute the written norm for the spoken one. Whatever the way out, the consequences were the same. Actual everyday speech of normal citizens was in practice discarded as

an object of study and this meant that for the next fifty years no one would know how Danes spoke the language. Lingustics in Denmark had to wait for the sociolinguists to investigate that.

Accordingly, the pathologists of language were left with a very abstract theoretical framework that was only minimally relevant to the distinctions between normal and deviant language use.

What I have tried to diagnose and exemplify here is the fundamental split which occurred in this period between the practical and applied disciplines and the theoretical investigations. While the Copenhagen school of structuralists blossomed, societal needs were met by non-linguists or by scholars without a base in theoretical linguistics.

The only witness I shall call is Denmark's first statistician of language, Aksel Noesgaard. Noesgaard is exemplary only in that the plan he conceived so as to achieve practical objectives was brought to fruition. This makes him atypical, of course, but all the more instructive.

Noesgaard (1880–1959) was a trained teacher. His concerns were mainly pedagogical but he was not at all blind to theoretical problems. As a teacher he had been struck by the fact that primers varied greatly in how many and which words they used. The next step in his reasoning is significant. To the question of which words a child should learn in school he answered: the most frequent ones!

Soon, however, Noesgaard realised theat frequency is not a simple matter[14] — it has to be defined carefully before you begin to count. After all, you have to stick to these first decisions during all the years when you just count and count. In delimiting his text types, Noesgaard had to speculate on which texts would be relevant for his specific purposes. He chose the following: readers for children, assorted texts for small children and readers and fiction for the same age group, scientific reading from school books, newspaper texts, texts relating to commercial correspondence, modern Danish fiction and essays written by students at teachers' colleges. This seems to be a ragbag, but both general reading and the professional vocabulary are represented in the sample. Of course, results based on the sample as a whole are only valid in so far as all those words which do not appear more than once are discarded. Noesgaard informs us that this goes for 60% of the total amount of words. Further technical details are not relevant here; suffice it to say that Noesgaard chose to work with relatively small samples (100,000 words) for each text type and that he did not have a computer. Instead he hired his family to count.

Exploiting this first frequency count, Noesgaard created a system of readers and writing exercises in which only the most frequent words were used. Subsequently he supplemented his frequency counts by carring out the first nationwide spelling investigation. He classified the word forms in this study by error type and according as to the global percentage of correct forms for each word form separately. This furnished him with knowledge of which types of errors were the most frequent and from the point of view of single words it made it possible for him to grade these according to orthographical difficulty. This knowledge was put to use in his important spelling lists. By inspecting these lists and Noesgaard's other works, teachers could find out which words were both frequent and difficult (and if they wanted to they could see what the difficulties were), which were frequent and easy, which were infrequent but easy, and finally which were both infrequent and difficult to spell. The last group of words one could be relaxed about while teachers concentrated their efforts on the first-mentioned group of words.

Noesgaard was not without linguistic training but he was not part of the linguistic milieu of the Copenhagen school. But contrary to the linguists of the time he had an impact. When in the late 1940s the Social Democrats began to talk of orthographical reform, none of the linguists had any empirical data bearing on this issue — but Noesgaard had. And in 1945 when his spelling investigation was published, everyone could see for themselves that more than a third of the total amount of spelling errors found were errors of capital letters in nouns. The single most important change in the law of 1948 was precisely the abolition of capital letters in nouns. By a stroke of genius the minister of education made the population much more clever at spelling.

Conclusion

What happened in this, the last of the three periods discussed, was that applied linguistics was split off from theoretical linguistics. Henning Spang-Hanssen, an engineer who became professor of applied and mathematical linguistics, had his *début* as a writer in 1946. His paper was entitled 'The need for an applied linguistics' (in Danish). Before it was published Spang-Hanssen sent this paper to Louis Hjelmslev and promptly received an invitation to lecture to the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen. Spang-Hanssen said: °

> While our knowledge of natural phenomena through the applied natural sciences exercises direct influence on social conditions, the science of language phenomena, which are likewise of fundamental social importance, has hitherto shown very few social effects and little contact with public life. Meanwhile, in society several problems of the linguistic functions occur which may and should be dealt with scientifically: relations of language to conception and thinking, professional terminologies, linguistic economy, shorthand, orthography, dialects as against standard language, 'purification' of languages, language teaching, the problem of international linguistic communication etc. Such topical problems show the need for applied linguistics, a science that, building on the results of structural linguistics, must accomplish a thorough analysis of the social functions of language, as far as possible in quantitative form. (Spang-Hanssen, 1946).

The crucial clause is: 'building on the results of structural linguistics'. It was not easy to accomplish then and it was not to be easier when transformational grammar dominated the scene. The net result has been that it fell to the generation of Claus Færch to break with this pattern and start from the other side in looking the facts of the applied situation — the classroom — straight in the eyes. In doing so Claus Færch was in close agreement with naturalistic trends in such neighbouring fields as the sociology of science and sociolinguistics. The new ways of posing empirical questions, rather than doing armchair philosophising, have to my mind led to important insights and a host of interesting new problems. It seems appropriate to end this essay by expressing the hope and the conviction that Claus's many gifted pupils will lead on towards a new integration of theoretical and applied linguistics on these terms.

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Notes

1. This passage is a free translation of Rask's prize essay as edited by Louis Hjelmslev (Hjelmslev, 1932: 31ff).
2. The debate has been summarised recently by Marie Bjerrum (1980).
3. N. M. Petersen modified Rask's orthographical ideas step by step. In 1837 he published a short treatise in which he argues that the *j* is superfluous but it was not until 1844–5 that he removed the capital letters. Swedish has never

had rules about this, so in an attempt at making Danish and Swedish more alike, capital letters could be dropped.
4. Cf. Brink & Lund, 1975.
5. Important contributions to the history of this period are Diderichsen (1947; reprinted 1966 with an English summary) and Diderichsen (1968, in Danish).
6. On Jespersen: Hjelmslev's obituary in *Acta Linguistica* and Haislund (1943), both of them reprinted in Sebeok (1966).
7. Cf. Skovgaard-Petersen (1976, with an English summary).
8. In Danish historiography 'The Modern Breakthrough' refers to the break with post-romanticism and the coming of naturalism.
9. On Hjelmslev: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen's obituary in *Acta Linguistica* (1965a).
10. The literature on Saussure is enormous; the most recent scholarly introduction is Harris (1987).
11. On Diderichsen: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen's obituary in *Acta Linguistica* (1965b).
12. *Nordisk Tidsskrift for Tale og Stemme.*
13. Apart from Hjelmslev's paper which has not been reprinted, the reader should refer to Fischer-Jørgensen (1985) for an overview of Zwirner's contribution.
14. An excellent introduction to the problems of frequency counts is Maegaard & Ruus (1987).

References

All references can be found in the consolidated reference list at the end of the book.

2 Early Language Transfer Experimental Thought

LARRY SELINKER

Looking over time, 'language transfer' as a type of cross-linguistic influence (CLI), is the quintessential contrastive analysis (CA)/interlanguage (IL) notion. The question of the principled role of the native language (NL) in the second language acquisition (SLA) process is one that was central to CA and has become once again central to theoretical and empirical work in understanding the creation by learners of IL.

Thus, CA and IL are essentially linked in terms of the concept language transfer. Importantly, it was Lado himself (e.g. 1957: 72) who strongly urged that the language transfer claims of CA be experimentally tested. There were two early attempts[1] to experimentally test the predictive claims of CA on the phonetic and phonological level: Nemser (1961a) and Brière (1964). These studies provide an empirical anchoring and an intellectual foundation on which the relatively large number of recent studies on language transfer stand. The purpose of this paper is to present a reinterpretation of these two early attempts in light of current knowledge. We will outline what they did in their very innovative work, the results of the two studies, where they are the same and where different and what their results might mean in light of current thinking on language transfer. As far as I know, both these attempts were made independently, neither being aware of the other's work or the planning of that work and each one took several years to complete that work.[2]

On the journey of CA to SLA, one scholar stands at a crucial methodological point: William Nemser. He was, it appears, the first to carry the recognition that informal observation of second language learning in relation to CA principles is quite defective, into precise perception and production tests of various phonological contrasts across language contact situations. A careful study of Nemser (and Brière as